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AIR BASE GROUND DEFENSE ARE WE READY?

BY

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING FORM
1. REPORT NUMBER	2. GOVT ACCESSION NO.	3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER
4. TITLE (and Subtitle) Air Base Ground Defense		5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED
		6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER
7. AUTHOR(s) LtCol Dale L. Landis, USAF		8. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s)
9. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS U.S. Army War College Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013		10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS
11. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS Same		12. REPORT DATE April 1989
		13. NUMBER OF PAGES 31
14. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Controlling Office)		15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report) Unclassified
		15a. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE
16. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report) Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.		
17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report)		
18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES		
19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number)		
20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) On 22 May 1984, the Chiefs of Staff United States Army and Air Force entered into a memorandum of agreement detailing the Joint Force Developments Process. Part of that agreement included an initiative on Air Base Ground Defense. This portion of the agreement directed the Army and Air Force to develop a Joint Service Agreement for the ground defense of air bases. This paper examines recent progress by the services and what still needs to be done to insure the defense of air assets. Areas of doctrine.		

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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

AIR BASE GROUND DEFENSE
ARE WE READY?

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013
31 March 1989

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Dale L. Landis, Lt Col, USAF

TITLE: Air Base Ground Defense - Are We Ready?

FORMAT: Individual Study Project

DATE: 1 April 1989 PAGES: 28 CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

On 22 May 1984, the Chiefs of Staff United States Army and Air Force entered into a memorandum of agreement detailing the Joint Force Developments Process. Part of that agreement included an initiative on Air Base Ground Defense. This portion of the agreement directed the Army and Air Force to develop a Joint Service Agreement for the ground defense of air bases. This paper examines recent progress by the services and what still needs to be done to insure the defense of air assets. Areas of doctrine, force structure, training and command, control, communications and intelligence are examined. A short discussion of the threat that is targeted against air bases is also included.



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AIR BASE GROUND DEFENSE ARE WE READY?

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

AirLand Battle doctrine is based on the deployment of air assets, along with ground resources, to defeat the enemy. Air assets, both Army and Air Force, and in contingency operation, possibly Naval and Marine resources, will be utilized to gain air superiority, support ground troops, strike second echelon forces and interdict deep into the enemy's battlefield.

The AirLand Battle doctrine cannot be accomplished without air assets and it is certain that all the missions listed above for the air components are necessary for the successful completion of the war, wherever it might occur. Can we be assured of the availability of these air assets? Will the sortie rate be sufficient to meet the needs of the theater commander?

It is certain that the enemy's doctrine places a high priority on the elimination of our air assets prior to or immediately at the beginning of a conflict. This philosophy is well stated in Soviet doctrine and the necessary forces are dedicated towards that end.¹ If the threat is real and the air assets important, what is being done to ensure their availability?

The Chiefs of Staff United States Army and Air Force signed

a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), in May 1984, highlighting the importance of the defense of air bases. This MOA, along with subsequent documents such as the Joint Service Agreement and DAF 525-14, assigned the Army the mission of external defense of installations while assigning the Air Force internal defense of Air Force installations.² Since 1984 the Army and Air Force have been trying to decide how best to implement this agreement. This conversation has not been limited to these two services as the Navy and Marine staffs and some host nations have also been involved.

This paper examines the services' preparation to accomplish the Air Base Ground Defense (ABGD) mission and, where found lacking, offers recommendations for continued efforts. First the threat will be examined and then a discussion will be offered on the formulation of doctrine, force structure, training, and command, control, communications, and intelligence.

Limiting this paper to the European scenario would be a mistake. The likelihood of a conflict elsewhere in the world is far greater than in Europe and if a "third world" conflict, such as those detailed in low intensity conflict doctrine, does occur the requirement for air assets may be just as important as in the European scenario. The defense of air bases in these contingency operations offers tremendous challenges to all involved. Even though this risk may vary depending on location, the discussions concerning the European theater usually apply to contingency operations.

Are all the services ready to meet this challenge? Can we defend our air assets to ensure their availability? Have we gone

far enough in our pursuit of this subject? Is everyone on the same sheet of music or are we singing different lyrics to this difficult melody? What is the acceptable risk we are willing to take in the defense of our air assets? This paper will look at these questions through a review of the threat, a discussion of the areas of concern mentioned above, an analysis of the discussion areas and then offer some recommendations on where we should head in the future.

It is recognized that these issues are evolving, dynamic and controversial. This paper is a snapshot of the issues taken by the author who is very interested in this important subject.

CHAPTER II

THREAT

Sortie reduction can occur through air attack, maintenance, combat loss and ground attack, to name a few causes. Notwithstanding the importance of all forms of loss, this paper will concentrate on the ground threat and its defeat. We concentrate our thoughts on special warfare forces (Spetsnaz) and/or Operational Maneuver Groups (OMG), and although this may be the major concern in Europe, we should also look at the wide spectrum of ground threats.

Army Field Manual 90-14 states that a "major element of Soviet doctrine is the disruption of our rear area to reduce our efficiency and support to the main battle area."³ The Soviets will accomplish this by targeting command and control centers, airfields, nuclear weapons facilities, communications sites, as well as troop concentrations. The enemy will reach these targets via air-dropped, airlanded, and/or amphibious units.⁴

A recent Jane's Defense Weekly article emphasized the importance of air base destruction to the Soviet doctrine. The article detailed Soviet exercises to accomplish this primary objective of their special purpose forces.⁵ So important is this to the Soviets that 27,000 to 30,000 forces are trained for this mission.⁶ Likewise, the North Koreans have 100,000 ranger-commandos tasked with the same mission.⁷ Not all of these forces will attack airfields; however, an installation commander cannot

disregard this threat.

The installation commander must also be ready to detect and defeat other levels of enemy threat. Most documents list three levels to include agents, saboteurs, terrorists, and partisans (Level I); unconventional forces (Spetsnaz) and tactical units of less than battalion size (Level II); and finally, tactical units of battalion size or larger (Level III).8

These threats cover the wide spectrum of forces confronting the defenders of an airfield whether that airfield is located in Europe or elsewhere in the world. It appears that a continuing risk to overseas installations exists. Airfields will not be targeted at all times but installation commanders must prepare to defend bases at all times, even during nonhostile periods. To counter these threats will take a well defined doctrine, specific training, coordinated command and control as well as sufficient force structure.

CHAPTER III

DISCUSSION

The signing of the MOA by the Chiefs of the Army and Air Force Staffs on 22 May 1984 changed the way air bases had been defended. A well researched history of the development of air base ground defense is detailed in Lt Col Michael Wheeler's military studies project dated 19 May 1986. Suffice it to say that the Air Force was the prime provider of defense before May 1984.⁹

Since May 1984 the Army and Air Force have been working diligently to implement the MOA. The areas of doctrine, force structure, training, equipment and command, control, communications and intelligence continue to provide challenges.

DOCTRINE

Based on the MOA, Generals Wickham and Gabriel signed a Joint Agreement on 25 April 1985 detailing the policies for the ground defense of Air Force bases and installations. This Agreement was to "be used to guide appropriate Army and Air Force regulations, manuals, publications and curricula." It was also to be the basis for "future development of joint doctrine and supporting procedures."¹⁰ Joint Service Agreement 8, as this document became known, among other things, defined terms, provided background and assigned responsibilities.

Subsequently, the Army and Air Force have met at all levels to determine the best approach to the defense of air bases. As defined in JSA 8, the Army is "responsible for providing forces for ABGD operations outside the boundaries of designated bases."¹¹ The document further states "when assigned the ABGD mission..., Army forces will be under the operational control of those Air Force base commanders."¹² Both services continue to struggle with the implications of these two statements.

Using the JSA as the basis for joint doctrine, the services at all levels attacked the problem of providing base defense. A Joint Air Base Ground Defense Working Group (JABGDWG) was formed.¹³ Action officers from the Air Force Office of Security Police, the Army Staff, TRADOC, TAC and most recently the Air Land Force Application (ALFA) Agency have offered documents detailing the defense of installations. Many of these documents remain in draft.

One joint document, DAP 525-14 and AFP 206-4, was published in July 1986 and remains the foundation publication for the "Joint Operational Concept for Air Base Ground Defense" - its title.

FORCE STRUCTURE

With the assignment of an increased mission via JSA 8, the Army received no additional manpower. JSA 8 authorized the Army to solicit host nation support for the purpose of ABGD wherever possible. Only in Germany have host nation troops been assigned the direct mission of ABGD. Efforts are underway for similar

support within the United Kingdom. Some nations indicate units will be available but refuse to test their response capability at this time.

The Air Force desires dedicated forces assigned to each installation and, where there are not host nation forces, has requested the Army to provide those units. Within the Army, rear area defense is a Military Police mission; however, limited manpower does not permit the dedication of forces to air bases. There is no indication the Military Police (MP) are going to receive additional manpower to conduct the ABGD mission. Many of the MP units are reserve and national guard assets and their in-theater arrival may be too late for the defense of air assets.

The Air Force recently adjusted part of its deployable security police forces to meet not only the ABGD mission but to also handle contingency situations such as Panama and Clark AFB. These new Contingency Security Elements are 13-man squads controlled by five MAJCOMs and located regionally to respond quickly to expanded roles and missions. With prepositioned equipment and intensive training these units will provide the Air Force with additional capability to meet the base defense mission as well as other functions.¹⁴

Other rear area forces that possibly could be used in the ABGD role are the combat support (CS) and combat service support (CSS) units. These units, plus those combat troops in reserve or rest, provide defense of the rear area to include airfields.

These Army units, deployable Air Force and Army Military Police units plus in-theater forces, are available to the installation commander for the defense of his critical air

assets. This commander must also consider other Air Force support forces assigned to him for possible use in base defense activities. No additional forces appear available in the foreseeable future.

Tactical sensor systems appear to be a tremendous force multiplier for the ABGD mission. Sensors keep defenders in the response mode versus the detection role. Both the Army and Air Force are working diligently to field improved systems.

TRAINING

With the implementation of JSA 9, an agreement fostered by the 31 initiatives of May 84, the Army assumed the responsibility to train Air Force personnel for air base ground defense. Three courses were established at Ft Dix, NJ, to accomplish this task.

Course I trains airmen/sergeants (E1-E4) for 23 days in basic combat skills. Course II develops combat skills necessary for a squad leader to operate. These sergeants/master sergeants (E4-E7) receive five weeks of training. Leadership skills necessary for a lieutenant/captain (O1-O3) to perform his ABGD mission are covered in nine week Course IV.15

Senior Air Force officer training in ABGD skills remains at Lackland Air Force Base, TX. Other Air Force support personnel, who are not normally armed, receive only firearms training at basic training and then again while stationed overseas.

Army Military Police training provides the skills necessary to perform the ABGD mission. Training takes place at each course MP personnel attend. The basic course emphasizes small unit

tactics while the NCO and officer courses stress unit leadership. CS and CSS units are trained and equipped for a benign tactical environment. Host nation units are yet to be tested in the ABGD mission; however it is obvious they will be familiar with the terrain and dedicated to the defense of their homeland. The advanced age of host nation reservists, their endurance, and the timeliness of recall could present a problem.

COMMAND, CONTROL, COMMUNICATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

For any operation to be successful good command, control, communications and intelligence (C3I) are necessary. Joint operations have highlighted problems in these areas. Joint ABGD exercises have not proven differently. CORPS DEFENDER 86 surfaced FM 90-14 doctrinal questions concerning the chain of command, control, communications, and intelligence. All were found to be "operationally reactive rather than proactive" - surrendering the initiative to the threat.¹⁶

Units dedicated to ABGD, as indicated in the MOA, are to be under the operational control of the base commander. Installation commanders are not trained in ground defense and may delegate ABGD command to their Chief, Security Police. Under contingency operations, the Marines may have secured the installation and Marine air assets may be operating from the base.

Whoever is in command will face a tremendous control problem. Fire control, especially with the range of available weapons, will require coordination between established base

defense operations centers (BDOC) and the rear area operation center (RADC).

Communications is key to the command and control of ABGD forces. Radios must interface and some form of secure voice must be established. Presently secure communications is accomplished via Communications-Electronic Operating Instructions (CEOIs). All the services are developing new radios with secure voice capability. Phase I of the Scope Shield tactical radio buy is to be completed in May 1989.¹⁷ ABGB exercises still test the use of land lines and messengers.

Intelligence is key to the understanding of the battlefield. The Army has well defined units capable of performing rear area intelligence operations. Air Force Regulation 206-2 outlines the intelligence support responsibilities. US Air Force Intelligence, Air Force Office of Special Investigations and the Security Police are all tasked to provide combat information and intelligence collection.¹⁸ Exercises, such as CORPS DEFENDER, Brim Frost and Salty Demo, indicate responsibilities are not being accomplished as the directive specifies.

The Air Base Survivability Capability Demonstration (Salty Demo) conducted at Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany in April/May 1985 clearly demonstrated the importance of ground intelligence. Without off base gathering of intelligence and the detection and destruction of the enemy, air operations will certainly be affected by lost sorties.¹⁹

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS

Analyzing the ABGD mission and its players has occupied the attention of numerous staff members and contractor personnel for sometime. Several large exercises, Salty Demo for example, have tested the procedures. All this effort has resulted in numerous findings and even more recommendations on what is wrong with our doctrine, the execution of that doctrine, force structure problems, training deficiencies and C3I confusions that will effect mission accomplishment. Limited progress has been made as evidenced by the most recent Brim Frost 89 exercise. Many of the same problems found at Brim Frost 87 still exist. Likewise, CORPS DEFENDER 86, the Army's largest rear area operation exercise, even found the rear area doctrine of Army FM 90-14 lacking.²⁰

DOCTRINE

The JCS has not written any doctrine specifically addressing ABGD. The Army and Air Force are working together, and sometimes alone, to formulate doctrine to meet their own interpretation of the MOA. The Air Force Office of Security Police (AFOSP) is coordinating a new AFR 206-2 which provides Air Force doctrine on this subject. This draft differs somewhat from current Army doctrine contained in Army FM 90-14 and DAP 525-14. The

definition of an installation's geographical boundary and not relying on MP support for external defense are two differences.²¹

Further complicating this doctrinal question is the "in coordination" TRADOC/TAC publication IC 90-14, Army-Tactical Air Force Concept for Rear Security Operations, and the Air Land Forces Application (ALFA) Agency draft IC 90-12, Multi-Service Procedures for the Defense of a Joint Base, document. These two documents do not reflect the present Army and Air Force doctrine. Nor, in all cases, do threat definitions even match. The two documents do not coincide with current information contained in the new AFR 206-2.²²

Furthermore, the JABGDWG has not met since Feb 1986. At that time the Army terminated the meetings indicating work was completed on JSA 8. The Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations recently sent a letter to the Army Staff asking for renewal of the JABGDWG.²³ Initially, this group proved to be an excellent forum for working joint problems.

FORCE STRUCTURE

Force structure still offers the widest divergence between Army and Air Force staffers. The Air Force wants dedicated host nation, Army or Marine forces to provide external defense to installations. The Army, as well as the Marines, feel Air Force installations should be protected as any other resource in the rear area - installation personnel should provide defense against Level I and II threats while rear area support forces, in most cases Military Police units, should respond to threats on an

"as needed" basis. Priority of response is key to this doctrine.

Capt Robert Kenyon, in his Military Police Journal article, clearly amplifies the prevalent Army feeling by stating, "The position that Army units must be dedicated to the defense of OCONUS air bases is untenable with the current Army force structure."²⁴

CS, CSS and combat units in the rear area, plus on base personnel, must be added into the ABGD equation. Questions of training and arming need to be worked to ensure their usefulness to the installation command. Lack of radios, crew-served weapons, dedicated or organic indirect fire, or dedicated aviation must be considered.²⁵

Tactical sensor systems may be a practical solution to the lack of manpower. Detection of the enemy located outside the installation is paramount to his defeat and the reduction of sortie loss. Sensors place forces in a reaction mode instead of a detection role. Not detecting the enemy external to the installation could create a standoff threat.

Allowing the enemy to use standoff weapons to close the runways is not acceptable. The Rand Study on risk to tactical aircraft highlights potential sortie loss to this threat. Without dedicated forces, internal security police forces will find it difficult to counter this highly mobile threat.²⁶

TRAINING

Training of Air Force personnel at Ft Dix is proving

successful but with the announcement of the closure of Ft Dix this operation requires further attention. Previously, ABGD training was accomplished at Camp Bullis, an Army installation outside San Antonio, TX. Since Security Police specialty training is accomplished at Lackland AFB, TX (San Antonio) those individuals attending ABGD training either stayed at Lackland or were housed in tents at Camp Bullis. No travel expense was necessary to move these students and training days were maximized.

Since housing will be critical at any Army post (the Base Closure Committee recommended ABGD training be moved to Ft Knox, KY) but since Lackland now has empty quarters, it appears more appropriate to move ABGD training (along with Army instructors now at Ft Dix) back to Camp Bullis. If additional ranges are needed for heavy weapons training, Ft Hood, TX could provide such ranges.

Training of host nation personnel for ABGD must also be ensured. Continuous testing of these units is essential to gain confidence in their ability to perform the mission.

COMMAND, CONTROL, COMMUNICATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

Without the proper C3I the ABGD mission is doomed to failure. Past exercises have not added to the confidence level of our ability to perform. Interface with Army units continues to be weak as secure voice communications are not available. CORPS DEFENDER 86 found C3I functions critically lacking.

Current doctrine lacks unity of command and coordination of

fire.²⁷ Who will be in charge and make the critical decisions that will result in the successful defense of air bases is still uncertain. The Air Force believes the base commander to be in charge while the Army holds the ranking officer in the rear area responsible.

Control of indirect fire must receive additional attention. The Air Force possesses MK 19 grenade launchers and will be firing this weapon to the rear of external forces. Control of all indirect fire is essential for the safety of forces.

The Air Force Scope Shield radio buy will assist in the communications area tremendously. The Phase I buy is to be completed in May 1989 and Phase II, which includes secure voice, is under contract. The Army and Marines are considering entering into this buy.

Battlefield intelligence, especially Air Force involvement, is lacking. Neither Air Force Intelligence nor the Air Force Office of Special Investigation wants the mission. Both state manpower resources are not available to support this wartime mission.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

The action of General John A. Wickham, U.S. Army Chief of Staff and General Charles A. Gabriel, U.S. Air Force Chief of Staff, on 22 May 1984 was the "initial step in the establishment of a long-term, dynamic process whose objective will continue to be the fielding of the most affordable and effective airland combat forces."²⁸ After nearly five years of efforts by the Army and Air Force to implement the direction of the Chiefs, the defense of air assets may not be as advanced as these two men envisioned.

The Air Force is now training its personnel solely for internal defense of installations and not preparing to counter the threat that could slow or even stop air operations from external positions to the airfield. The Army is prepared to provide forces in prioritization of threats. By the time Army forces arrive, damage could be enough to force the closure of airfields - denying air assets to the airland battle or to contingency operations.

Based on risk assessments and exercise results, such as Salty Demo, the lack of base defense during any conflict could result in loss of aircraft sorties. In the European scenario enemy forces are targeted against the airfield destruction mission. In contingency operations agents, saboteurs, partisans, and terrorists could attempt to disrupt air operations. To

assure air operations the threat must be neutralized. To successfully accomplish this mission, in accordance with the existing MDA, joint operations are essential.

Recommendations that could improve our ability to perform the ABGD mission are offered in the next chapter. Recommendations on doctrine, force structure, training and command, control, communications and intelligence are prioritized within each subject area. Almost all the recommendations cost very little money but do require the time of Headquarters personnel.

CHAPTER VI

RECOMMENDATIONS

Each exercise or joint meeting results in numerous recommendations that effect how ABGD is accomplished. Recognizing the difficulty in formulating joint policy and understanding the importance of the defense of our air assets requires the utmost attention be placed on this subject. Agreements must be formulated between the services and host nations to ensure the proper defense of air assets is available to reduce the heavy price of sortie loss. Action after the fact will not ensure air assets when most needed - at the beginning of the conflict. We will get only one opportunity. It is apparent that joint doctrine is the key to our ABGD problems.

The Air Force must be prepared to defend installations with available personnel. Deployable forces may not arrive before attacks take place. The enemy is likely to attempt to destroy air assets prior to or at the outbreak of hostilities. Not preparing for such a possibility could result in unacceptable loss of air assets. It may be necessary to move aircraft from threatened installations until security can be assured.

DOCTRINE

It is essential Army and Air Force staffs work out their differences on whether dedicated forces are available for the

ABGD mission. If the Air Force is responsible for more than internal defense of its installations the doctrine of MOA 8 must change. Air Force personnel must be trained to meet that mission and increased emphasis on sensor systems is needed. The Air Force, before MOA 8, exercised its capabilities to handle both internal and external defense of installations. Sufficient forces were not available to counter the threat at that time.

One body must write ABGD doctrine instead of the present divergence of the responsibility. Doctrine should start at JCS and then be expanded at the service staff level. The Army staff and the Air Force Office of Security Police are the primary agencies of ABGD doctrine. Jointly the staffs should write and coordinate doctrine. Subordinate organizations should coordinate their documents with the appropriate headquarters staff before coordinating draft to ensure compliance with present philosophy.

The JABGDWG should meet regularly to solve ABGD problems. The Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations request for renewal of the group should be approved. The group should be expanded to include the Marines. This group should provide guidance to the headquarter staffs on the appropriate approach in solving ABGD problems.

FORCE STRUCTURE

It is essential that we know what forces are going to be available to accomplish this important mission. Each installation commander must know what staffing is available. Removal of air assets from the installation may be the best

alternative if defense is not available. Heavy loss of aircraft to the ground threat should not be accepted.

If Army units are not going to be dedicated to installations and the Army is to maintain external defense of airfields then those units assigned the response role should be airmobile. For this to occur, MP units require dedicated air units stationed in the rear area.

Host nation commitments must be solidified. Additional countries should be approached concerning this mission. Host nation support appears to be the best source for manpower to perform the ABGD mission. The Army is entrusted to work this source of manpower.

The Services should continue to investigate the uses of CS, CSS, combat units in the rear and base support personnel in the defense of Air Force installations. If these units are to be used, increased firepower is required. The Army needs to add MK19 and M-60s to these unit TOAs. MD units should acquire added firepower to counter the Level II and III threats. Antitank and mortar capability should be assessed.29

TRAINING

To save travel monies and training days, all ABGD training, upon the closure of Ft Dix, should be accomplished at Lackland AFB and Camp Bullis, TX. Ranges could be provided by Ft Hood. Army instructors should continue to be used to ensure Air Force personnel receive the highest level of combat skill training.

Senior Air Force officers, who will be responsible for

command and control of the ABGD mission, should receive additional training. Base commanders could receive this instruction at Maxwell AFB, AL during the Base Commander's course. Knowledge of Army and Marine capabilities is essential. Participation in joint exercises must continue to give senior Air Force officers the opportunity to hone their ABGD skills.

COMMAND, CONTROL, COMMUNICATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

Use of the most skilled and ranking commander should be considered in the execution of the ABGD mission. The Air Force installation commander may not always be in the best position to accomplish this task. Most senior Air Force officers lack experience and training in command and control of ABGD activities. There is still ambiguity as to who should be in charge.

Indirect fire control requires continuous review. Present procedures appear to be lacking. The AC-130 gunship could provide fire support and at the same time deliver accurate firepower to the ABGD role. All policymakers must direct their attention to this important problem.

The confusion concerning which Air Force agency is going to provide combat intelligence must be solved. The Air Force Office of Special Investigations appears to be most capable; however, increased manpower may be required. Reserve personnel, specifically trained in the area of combat intelligence, could be the solution.

Communication capabilities require improvement. For the Air

Force the Scope Shield radio will provide highly effective communications' capability. The Army and Marines should continue to show an interest in this system.

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